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FM USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0492
INFO AFGHA/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNCRI/VIENNA CRIME COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1820
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0119
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 UNVIE VIENNA 000009

SIPDIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR ONDCP DIRECTOR KERLIKOWSKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2020

TAGS: [AF](#) [SNAR](#) [UNCND](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: PREVIEWING THE MARCH 2010 COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC
DRUGS

REF: A. UNVIE 570

[1](#)B. UNVIE 172

[1](#)C. UNVIE 005

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Glyn T. Davies for
reasons 1.5(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The March 2010 Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) provides the United States with an excellent opportunity to highlight the Obama Administration's forthcoming National Drug Control Strategy and its top priorities in the international drug policy arena. As this March is the Administration's first substantive foray into the CND, other member states will be watching to see how our language departs from the previous administration, what issues we advance, and whether we continue to be a leader in international drug control efforts. The dynamics of this year's CND, will be influenced by an activist Iranian Chair, ongoing ideological difference over how best to address the world drug problem, and the ever-deepening financial and administrative difficulties of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Director Kerlikowske's participation will provide vivid evidence of the Administration's commitment to international cooperation on counter drug issues, but we need to be ready for the compromises and half steps that multilateral diplomacy demands. The CND Chair, Iranian Ambassador Soltanieh, clearly desires a successful Commission meeting that reflects well on both Iran and him personally, especially after disputes in the Iranian leadership undercut the success he believed he had made in October during the Tehran Research Reactor negotiations. Nevertheless, the stakes in greater bilateral relationship with the U.S. and debate within the Iranian leadership on engagement could cause Tehran to intercede and make it more difficult for the U.S. to achieve its goals at the CND. Keeping any engagement with Soltanieh limited to CND business and low-key will improve chances for success. Meanwhile, the Afghan delegation, with yet to be decided leadership, will be looking for U.S. help to ensure that Kabul is not singled out for its leading role in the international drug trade. END SUMMARY

Chance for Obama Administration
To Put Best Face Forward

[1](#)2. (U) Last year, after months of intense and sometimes

bitter negotiations, member states adopted a political declaration reviewing the past ten years of drug control and formulating an action plan for the next decade. While the documents were ultimately agreed to by consensus, intractable issues like "harm reduction," human rights, and the false dichotomy between eradication and alternative development (among others) were not resolved. Ten months later, some delegations (mostly in the EU) still express frustration over the 2009 outcome documents and complain that while the world drug situation has changed, thinking in many parts of the world (including in the U.S.) has not sufficiently evolved.

13. (U) As this will be the Obama Administration's and ONDCP Director Kerlikowske's first substantive foray into the CND, many national delegations are eager to see what face we put forward-especially in light of last year's negotiations over "harm reduction". In this regard, the CND provides a fantastic opportunity to roll-out the new National Drug Control Strategy, and send the message that the United States is eager to partner with other countries in tackling this threat. Most importantly, a demonstration of our serious commitment to raising the profile of international counternarcotic efforts will reassure other delegations that the U.S. continues to be a serious leader in developing and advancing pragmatic and proven policies to counter the supply, trafficking and abuse of drugs. In order to build this alliance, we should reach out soon both here in Vienna and in key capitals to float U.S. ideas and priorities. Key targets, include many delegations in the G77 (and especially Argentina and Algeria, current and likely future G77 President), the EU (Madrid and Brussels), Mexico and Canada, among others.

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Critical that U.S. Keeps CND,
UNODC Mandate Focused

14. (U) The last year has seen intense negotiations on the financial and administrative situation of the UNODC (the UN Office which gets its guidance from the CND and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)). Via CND resolutions, member states have tasked UNODC with growing number of mandates, even as its funding situation continues to worsen (Ref A). We have consistently called upon CND member states to refrain from unduly expanding UNODC's mandate (especially without simultaneously dedicating voluntary resources to fulfill these new directives), and to instead focus any new mandates (via resolution or otherwise) around UNODC's increasingly thematically and regionally organized work, as well as the drug conventions. It will be important that the U.S. continue to lead by example in this regard, and discourage other delegations from using the CND as a "Christmas tree" where we hang nationally specific issues that are not of international priority nor squarely relevant to the drug conventions. We also must work with other partners to ensure that any new mandates coming out of the CND are sufficiently funded. This will require early and frequent consultations with allies in the EU, Canada, Japan and Australia delegations that all have proven records of fiscal discipline.

Iran Chair Keen to Succeed

15. (S) The CND Chair plays an important substantive role in the outcome of the meeting, and a special complicating factor this year is the chairmanship of Iranian Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh. Soltanieh is a nuclear physicist who relishes the

role of champion for the "downtrodden". Promising delegations that he would spare no effort and would be at the service of all delegations, Soltanieh has indicated plans to play a prominent role in this year's meeting.

¶6. (C) He clearly desires a successful CND that will reflect positively on Iranian leadership and perhaps even more so, on him personally, especially given the high profile failure of his work on the Tehran Research Reactor negotiations to pass muster in Tehran. Iran's interactions with the UNODC and support of regional initiatives, the country's serious domestic drug problem and its interest in advancing the general objectives of the UNODC in controlling the flow of narcotics out of Afghanistan. Iran wishes to be seen as a regional leader in counternarcotics efforts (Ref B). As the U.S. is a traditionally major player in the CND, and since we (almost alone) cannot work through the collectivity of a regional group, Soltanieh needs to cultivate a constructive, if not collegial, relationship with the U.S. At the same time, Iran could use the opportunity of the CND to criticize or confront the U.S. on any resolutions pursued or on the lack of support for flexible funding for regional efforts, especially given the high cost in lives and dollars Iran has paid for its counternarcotics efforts, which it repeatedly argues benefit the whole world. Soltanieh's work as Vice Chair of the 2009 CND and within UNODC fora leads us to believe that he would want to resist such efforts to tarnish the perception of him as a fair arbiter, but he is likely not strong enough to press back against the Iranian leadership in Tehran, which he has admitted in other venues has conditioned his flexibility (Ref C). Keeping any engagement with Soltanieh low key and related only to the key business of the CND would probably serve both his and our interests and prevent individuals in Tehran from feeling the need to publicly undercut our interactions. At the same time, limited engagement could start to build modest bridges in an area of common interest and help to achieve U.S. goals at the CND, including the passage of multiple resolutions where Soltanieh could be either a help or a

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hindrance.

Comment

¶7. (U) Another U.S. priority for this CND relates to Afghanistan. The Afghan Ambassador tell us he does not yet know who will represent his government in Vienna, but he is aware of previous instances where Russia or Pakistan have sought to introduce resolution language that shines a spotlight on Afghanistan's role in the international drug trade. Without whitewashing Afghanistan's huge drug problem, we will want to ensure that the CND does not detract from the effort to maintain a positive, multilateral-focus for our Afghan counterdrug effort. Early articulation of agreed U.S. goals for the CND including a positive message of international partnership, will help us to deliver a successful CND. With an international audience eager to hear from the Obama Administration, the U.S. is primed to deliver outcomes worthy of our place as leader in international drug control efforts. The challenge will be to harness that message to the unpredictable political dynamics of Vienna and the legacy of unresolved differences from last year's

CND. END COMMENT
DAVIES